

WILDLIFE PROFILES



Western Painted Turtle

Range: The western painted turtle can be found in North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Eastern Colorado, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Western Illinois, Montana, Washington, North of the border into Canada and low elevation parts of Wyoming.

Size: Western painted turtles can grow up to 10 inches long, and females are usually larger than males.

Habitat: The western painted turtle lives in streams and lakes as well as pasture ponds and roadside pools. It is found below 5,900 ft of elevation.

Young: Painted turtles lay an average of 5 to 15 eggs in nests dug in sandy soil near water. The eggs hatch after 72–80 days, and the young turtles grow quickly, sometimes doubling their size in the first year.

Predators: Painted turtle eggs and baby turtles are often eaten by many other animals including garter

snakes, crows, chipmunks, squirrels, skunks, snakes, weasels, muskrats, mink, raccoons, badgers and foxes. Adult turtles get eaten less often due to the safety of their shells, although sometimes they are killed by hawks, eagles, and raccoons.

Food: The western painted turtle's diet is mostly insects in the spring and early summer. Later in the summer and early fall, it eats a more balanced mix of plants and insects. They do not eat in the winter while they hibernate. While hibernating, the body temperature of the painted turtle averages 6 °C (which is 43 °F). Brr!

Did you know? A turtle's top part of its shell is called a "carapace" and the bottom part is called a "plastron." A turtle's shell is actually fused to their spine, so a turtle cannot ever leave its shell; it's an outside part of its skeleton!

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Western Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma mavortium*)

Range: Western tiger salamanders are native to Wyoming and can be found throughout the state.

Size: Adults have sturdy bodies and are about 5-8 inches long and weigh about 4 to 8 ounces.

Habitat: Western tiger salamanders live in deep burrows, up to two feet below the surface, near ponds, lakes or slow-moving streams and are one of a few salamanders able to survive in the dry western landscape. You might even see them seeking the cool, wet habitat of a window well at your house.

Young: Western tiger salamanders usually lay groups of 25 to 100 eggs attached to underwater plants, stones or logs. These eggs hatch after a few weeks. Salamanders, like most amphibians, go through something called metamorphosis. This means young salamanders hatch from eggs underwater with external gills which allow them to breathe underwater. These aquatic young salamanders, called

larvae, continue to live underwater while they grow for up to two years before changing their appearance and living mainly on the land as an adult. Other animals that do this include frogs and toads.

Predators: Western tiger salamanders can get eaten by badgers, snakes, bobcats and owls.

Food: Western tiger salamanders like to eat small insects and worms, and larger adults might even eat small frogs and mice.

Did you know? Thanks to students from Pathfinder High School in Lander, the blotched tiger salamander (which is a type of western tiger salamander that lives across Wyoming) was recently made the official Wyoming State Amphibian.

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Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum*)

Range: Tiger salamanders have widest range of any other North American salamander, from southeastern Alaska, across Canada and throughout all of the United States down to central Mexico.

Size: An average tiger salamander is 6-8 inches long. They have short snouts, thick bodies, sturdy legs and long tails.

Habitat: Adult tiger salamanders live on land in forests, meadows, and marshes. They can be found under rocks, stumps, and in burrows. These salamanders live underground for most of their lives in burrows that they usually dig for themselves.

Young: Adults migrate to small ponds in late winter or early spring, usually after a warm rain. Eggs are laid in small pools and hatch after about 30 days. Just like frogs, salamanders are “amphibians,”

which means they start out living in water before they change body shape and live on land. The baby salamanders that live in the water are called larvae. The larvae live in water until they change into adults at 2.5 to 5 months of age and crawl out of the water to live on the land.

Predators: Adult tiger salamanders are eaten by badgers, raccoons, snakes, bobcats and owls. Young salamanders are eaten by aquatic insects, other salamanders and snakes.

Food: Their diets consist largely of small insects, frogs, baby snakes and worms.

Did you know? Tiger salamanders are the largest land-dwelling salamander in North America. Tiger salamanders are long-lived, averaging 10 to 16 years in the wild.